

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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R 070532Z JUN 78
FM USINT BAGHDAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6289
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 1176

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PROP, PINT, PEPR, IZ, UR
SUBJECT: IRAQI-SOVIET RELATIONS

REF: BAGHDAD 1154

1. SOVIET AMBASSADOR-AT-LARGE ARRIVED
BAGHDAD JUNE 3. IRAQI MEDIA QUOTE HIM AS SAYING HE WILL
DISCUSS WITH IRAQI OFFICIALS DEVELOPMENT OF BILATERAL
RELATIONS AND ISSUES OF COMMON CONCERN. SOMEWHAT
SURPRISINGLY, SOVIET AMBASSADOR BARKOVSKY MET WITH
SADDAM HUSSEIN THE FOLLOWING DAY, APPARENTLY WITHOUT
SPECIAL ENVOY. OFFICIAL IRAQI RELEASE OSTENTATIVELY
DESCRIBES THE MEETING AS A "DISCUSSION OF MEANS TO DEVELOP
THE RELATIONS OF CORDIAL FRIENDSHIP PREVAILING BETWEEN
THE TWO COUNTRIES."

2. DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY HERE IS PUZZLED BY SEEMING
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HIGH-LEVEL SNUB TO SOVIET VISITOR, BUT SINCE HE IS STILL
IN TOWN IT IS POSSIBLE THAT IRAQIS PREFERRED TO RECEIVE
WHATEVER MESSAGE HE BROUGHT FROM MOSCOW AND PROVIDE REPLY
LATER. THERE HAS BEEN NO ABSENCE OF DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE
TWO SIDES. SADDAM HUSSEIN HAS MET FAIRLY REGULARLY
WITH AMBASSADOR BARKOVSKY, AND FOREIGN MINISTER HAMMADI
RECENTLY MET WITH GROMYKO IN NEW YORK AT SPECIAL UN

SESSION. NONETHELESS IT SEEMS PECULIAR THAT SADDAM HUSSEIN WOULD KEEP SPECIAL ENVOY AT ARMS LENGTH DESPITE IRAQ NEWS AGENCY STATEMENT THAT HE WAS INVITED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY AND FACT THAT MIN STATE ALWAN HELD A DINNER IN HIS HONOR ON JUNE 4. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT HIS ARRIVAL WAS NOT ENTIRELY WELCOME. HE WILL REPORTEDLY CONTINUE ON TO DAMASCUS WHEN HE LEAVES.

3. MEANWHILE, BAGHDAD RUMOR MILL IS PUMPING OUT STORIES OF NEW EXECUTIONS AND ARRESTS OF COMMUNIST INFILTRATORS INTO IRAQI MILITARY. ONE INTERESTING REPORT CLAIMS THAT THERE WAS A SHOOTOUT BETWEEN MILITARY SECURITY AUTHORITIES AND COMMUNIST OFFICERS RESISTING ARREST AT RASHID CAMP ON EASTERN OUTSKIRTS OF BAGHDAD. INCIDENT IS THOUGHT TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE SOMETIME IN LATE MAY AND TO HAVE RESULTED IN NUMEROUS CASUALTIES. SUPPORTING THIS STORY IS FACT THAT THERE WAS HEAVY AMBULANCE TRAFFIC FROM GENERAL DIRECTION OF RASHID CAMP TO BAGHDAD EMERGENCY HOSPITAL DURING LAST WEEK OF MAY. THIS MIGHT ALSO EXPLAIN INCREASED SECURITY EFFORTS WHICH WE DETECTED AT THAT TIME (BAGHDAD 1125).

3. RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH SYRIAN AMBASSADOR AND SYRIAN EMBASSY COUNSEL HAVE FAILED TO ELICIT ANY CONFIRMATION FOR INTERESTING PROPOSITION ADVANCED IN CONFIDENTIAL

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DAMASCUS 2943 THAT SYRIA AND IRAQ MIGHT BE INCLINED TO MOVE TOWARD RAPPROCHEMENT AS A RESULT OF PARALLEL DISENCHANTMENT WITH SOVIETS. SYRIAN AMBASSADOR, FOR EXAMPLE, CLAIMS THAT IRAQI ATTITUDE TOWARD MIDDLE EAST DISPUTE IS SUCH THAT NO SETTLEMENT OF QUARREL WITH SYRIA IS POSSIBLE UNLESS SYRIA WERE TO ABANDON ITS INTEREST IN A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. AMBASSADOR ALSO DENIED THAT TISHRIIN EDITOR RIFAI HAD MET WITH PRESIDENT BAKR WHEN HE WAS HERE A MONTH AGO FOR ARAB JOURNALISTS CONFERENCE.

4. COMMENT: AMBASSADOR SEEMED GENUINELY CONVINCED THAT THERE HAD BEEN NO MEETING SUCH AS THE ONE DESCRIBED BY RIFAI TO EMBASSY DAMASCUS. WISHING TO AVOID ANY INDICATION THAT OUR INFORMATION ON MEETING CAME FROM DAMASCUS, WE DID NOT PROBE FURTHER. WE ARE LEFT WITH IMPRESSION THAT RIFAI EITHER DID NOT INFORM THE SYRIAN EMBASSY OF HIS SECRET HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OR THAT HE WAS EXAGGERATING HIS ROLE. END COMMENT.

5. SYRIANS HERE DO SEEM TO SHARE IRAQI DISENCHANTMENT WITH ARAB COMMUNISTS. SYRIAN AMBASSADOR SAID THAT ALL IRAQI COMMUNISTS AND MOST SYRIAN COMMUNISTS WERE

WORKING FOR MOSCOW FIRST AND THEIR OWN COUNTRIES
SECOND.

6. A DEVELOPMENT POSSIBLY UNRELATED TO CURRENT
IRAQI-SOVIET DIFFERENCES EXCEPT IN MINDS OF LOCAL
DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY IS THE RECENT UPSURGE IN KURDISH
DISSIDENT ACTIVITY (SEPTTEL). SOME MEMBERS OF DIPLOMATIC
COMMUNITY ARE JUMPING TO CONCLUSION THAT PROBLEMS IN
KURDISH AREAS AT A SEASON WHEN IRAQI AUTHORITIES USUALLY
EXPECT LITTLE TROUBLE MAY RESULT FROM CURRENT DIFFICULTIES
WITH SOVIETS. IRAQIS ARE WELL AWARE THAT SOVIETS ONCE HAD
TIES WITH TALABANI AND COULD SUPPORT HIS ACTIVITIES THROUGH
SYRIA. WHILE THIS IS A POSSIBILITY, WE WOULD FIND IT VERY
SURPRISING FOR SOVIETS TO TAKE A STEP WHICH COULD THREATEN
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THE VERY FABRIC OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAQIS,
PARTICULARLY AT A TIME WHEN THERE ARE ALREADY SOME
STRAINS.
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